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# END AND BEGINNING

*ALSO BY JOHN MASEFIELD*

**PLAYS:**

THE FAITHFUL  
MELLONEY HOLTSPUR; or, The Pangs of  
Love  
A KING'S DAUGHTER  
ESTHER. (*Adapted and partially translated  
from the French of Jean Racine*)  
BERENICE. (*Adapted from the French of  
Jean Racine*)  
THE TRIAL OF JESUS  
THE TRAGEDY OF NAN  
TRISTAN AND ISOLT  
THE COMING OF CHRIST  
EASTER

**POETRY:**

COLLECTED POEMS  
SELECTED POEMS  
THE DAFFODIL FIELDS  
DAUBER  
ENSLAVED AND OTHER POEMS  
GOOD FRIDAY  
KING COLE AND OTHER POEMS  
LOLLINGDON DOWNS AND OTHER  
POEMS, WITH SONNETS  
MIDSUMMER NIGHT  
PHILIP THE KING AND OTHER  
POEMS  
A POEM AND TWO PLAYS  
REYNARD THE FOX  
RIGHT ROYAL  
MINNIE MAYLOW'S STORY AND OTHER  
TALES AND SCENES  
A TALE OF TROY

**OTHER WORKS:**

SARD HARKER: A Novel  
ODTAA: A Novel  
GALLIPOLI  
ST. GEORGE AND THE DRAGON  
THE OLD FRONT LINE  
THE MIDNIGHT FOLK  
THE HAWBUCKS  
RECENT PROSE  
WITH THE LIVING VOICE  
THE "WANDERER" OF LIVERPOOL  
THE "CONWAY"  
THE "BIRD OF DAWNING"

# END AND BEGINNING

BY

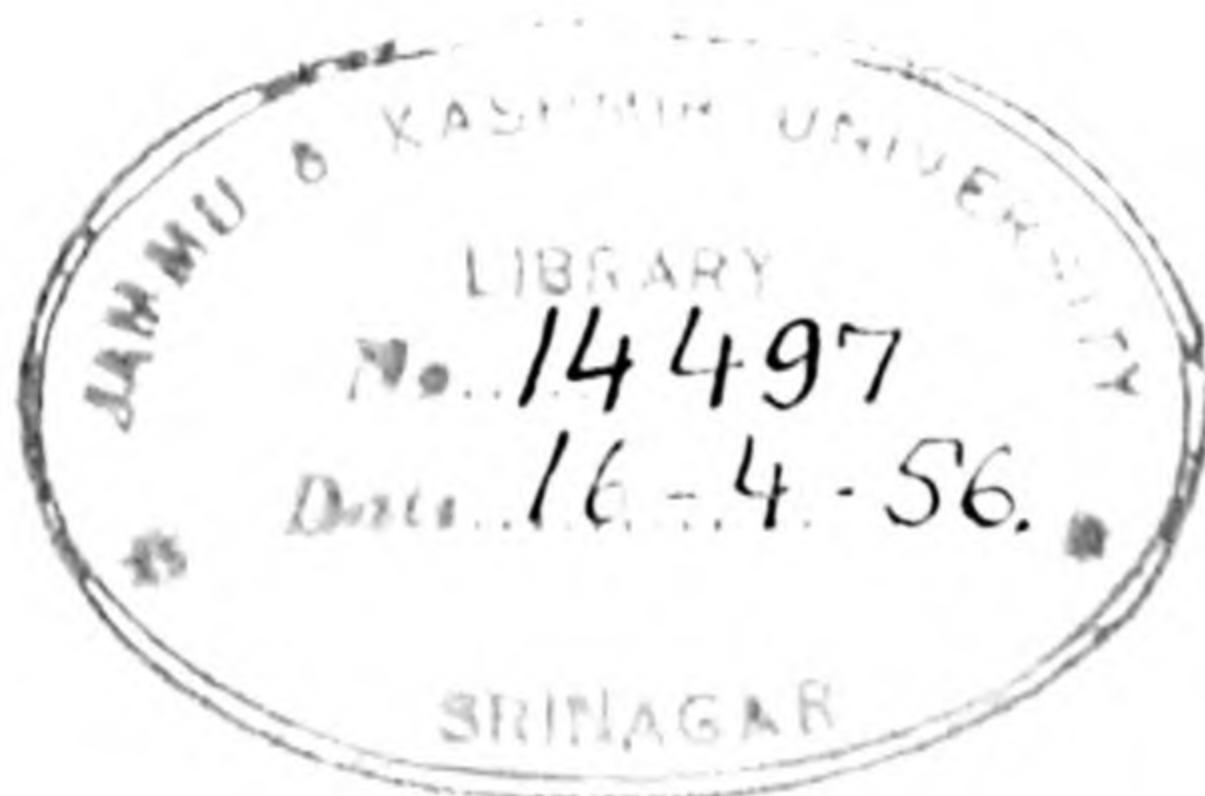
JOHN MASEFIELD



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1934



MJ

R61

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To  
**FLORENCE**

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## PERSONS

MARY STUART	SYBIL M. HERIZ-SMITH
FIRST WOMAN	JUDITH MASEFIELD
SECOND WOMAN	ROSE BRUFORD
AN OFFICER	LESLIE DAVEY
A NOBLE	ALBERT FOWLER
A SPIRIT OF BEAUTY	CHRYSTABEL DALE ROBERTS

*The scene is a small room in Fotheringhay Castle. A settle with a canopy is in the centre. A small table with ink, pens, wine and a cup is to the Actors' Left of this settle.*

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## END AND BEGINNING

### MARY

I am that Mary Stuart, the Queen of Scotland:  
Once Queen of France, now prisoner here in England.

\* \* \*

Evil indeed were my days as the Scottish Queen.

\* \* \*

When Bothwell and others murdered my husband,  
Darnley,

Bothwell seized me as prize, for he meant to be King.  
His fellow-murderers hunted him out of Scotland  
And shut me up in Lochleven and seized my realm.

For one brief hour I was free:  
Men who were loyal came to me:  
For one brief hour, I hoped, in vain,  
To win my son and throne again.

I was betrayed again when the battle was joined.  
I had to ride for life, drinking the burns  
And sleeping in the heather like the grouse.

So, since Scotland was lost, without hope thence-forward,

## END AND BEGINNING

I came to England to ask for help from the Queen  
Who shut me in prison straight and has kept me  
prisoned

These nineteen years, nearly a half of my life.

It has been strictest prison: in all those years  
I have been watched and guarded, my people  
searched.

Such was my past.

\* \* \*

Last June, my enemies contrived my ruin.  
Their agents stirred some hotheads to conspire  
To league the French and Spanish against England  
And set me free. These hotheads wrote to me.  
I sent such answer as a Queen might send.

\* \* \*

My answer was in cipher. It was taken  
By English spies, who soon deciphered it,  
And wrote what they declared a copy of it,  
But to it added what their hatred urged,  
Passages about killing of the Queen.

Then, being satisfied, they seized the plotters  
(Men whom their agents only had set on)  
Tortured them to confessing anything,  
Then barbarously killed them publicly.  
All this in the design to have me killed.

## END AND BEGINNING

When they were ready, they proclaimed abroad  
How God in His great Mercy had revealed  
A hellish practice of the Scottish Queen  
Against the life of Queen Elizabeth;  
How murderers had sworn to run her through  
And how French armies and the Spanish fleet  
Were coming, to cut every English throat  
And make me Queen of England and of Scotland.

The church-bells rang, by order, in each parish  
For joy that such a plot had been frustrated.

When they had poisoned every English heart  
Against me, to the full, they sent the Peers  
All the great nobles of the Kingdom, led  
By Burghley, my chief enemy, "to try me."  
That was the phrase they used: they meant my death.

I, an anointed Queen, unjustly imprisoned,  
Was threatened, and brow-beaten and accused.  
The evidence was their own forgeries  
And madness from the tortured men now dead;  
Nothing of mine was brought, nor could be brought.  
No letter, not one word, written or spoken.  
But since they meant my death, I was condemned  
To suffer death.

I stand here under sentence;  
Certain not to receive more mercy now  
Than in the past: certain not to be rescued:  
Certain to die in very few more days.  
I try not to dread death; but oh I dread

## END AND BEGINNING

Lest murderers should kill me secretly  
Then publish that I killed myself, defiling  
This that God consecrated to be Queen.  
I pray I be not murdered secretly.

Such is my present: for my future, this  
My life's device: the puzzle "In my End  
Is my Beginning": I have often wondered  
And wonder now, what future it foretells.

Rescue and freedom and the hope of life  
These I put by: they cannot come to me.  
I will endure whatever God shall send  
And bear His gift of being Queen unshaken  
While He gives breath to me.

For not much longer  
Shall I have breath. The winter night is dark.  
I will pray God, and then lie down to rest.

*(She goes Left Back)*

*(The WOMEN ENTER on lower stage, FIRST WOMAN Left, SECOND Right. They go up on to the upper stage and stand Centre.)*

### FIRST WOMAN

A man in a black cloak hastens down  
The palace stairs in a sleeping town

A white-faced man who means no good  
With a parchment, sealed, hid under his hood

## END AND BEGINNING

He mounts his horse and he rides north west  
He rides like Death and he looks unblest.

Is it a head or a skull that hides  
Under his cloak as he rides and rides.

He is a man, for he draws quick breath  
But he rides like Death and he brings death

Spirits like his go by in glare  
When the hounds of hell are in the air.

## SECOND WOMAN

Another man rides the self-same course  
Through the sleeping land on a Queen's horse,

A gallows-tree man, whose fit salute  
Is the fox's howl and the owl's hoot.

He sings, as he rides, an evil strain,  
He looks like Cain and he is Cain.

What does he bear in the canvas pack  
Buckled against him on his back?

When he stops to drink, he draws it bare:—  
An axe-blade bright as a plough's share.

He kisses the blade and cries, "My chink,  
You shall soon eat: you shall soon drink."

## END AND BEGINNING

### FIRST WOMAN

The riders have met: they ride like friends  
Who have ends in common and evil ends.

They turn at the cross: they draw nigh  
They are coming here, not going by.

The horn at the castle gate is blown  
The gate opens, the hinges groan.

They ride within to the castle-yard  
The gate shuts, it is locked and barred.

There are lights in the yard: the gaoler goes  
To ask 'Who has come there?' Now he knows.

*(Indicating Right Back)*

And now they enter the gaoler's den.  
Lighten our Night from midnight men.

### SECOND WOMAN

What do they plot in the gaoler's room  
Whispering white-faced in the gloom?

No great good from a secret three:—  
Verjuice, vigilance, gallows-tree.

What do they whisper? Why do they call  
For a wooden stage in the castle hall?

## END AND BEGINNING

Why does vigilance creep the stair  
Up, up, up, to the curtain there?

Why does he stand there, breathing deep  
Near midnight thus, with the Queen asleep?

Why has he come here? What does he mean?  
(OFFICER ENTERS. *Right Back*)

OFFICER

Women. I want to see the Queen.

FIRST WOMAN

The Queen, our lady, has gone to rest.

OFFICER

Go, then, and rouse her: it were best.

FIRST WOMAN

Sir, we are loath to break her sleep.

OFFICER

The news I bring her will not keep.

## END AND BEGINNING

FIRST WOMAN

Sir, may we know what news you bring?

OFFICER

Fetch me this Queen to know the thing.

FIRST WOMAN

Sir, may we know what noble calls?

OFFICER

One who has stages built in halls  
And hung with black, for what may chance.  
One with men masked as for a dance  
Also in black, a sullen two.  
Sharp practice is the craft they do.  
One who has passports that shall free  
All prisoners whatsoe'er they be.  
Yellow-sealed passports writ in red  
Go: fetch your lady out of bed.

FIRST WOMAN

Since you bring freedom, I will go.

(FIRST WOMAN *goes*)

## END AND BEGINNING

(OFFICER, *indicating throne*)

You, pretty mistress, may I know  
What this gay trumpery may be?

SECOND WOMAN

Our lady's, the Queen's, dignity.

OFFICER

Our dignity? the Queen's? Her state?  
Her throne shall rest me as I wait. (*He sits*)

SECOND WOMAN

You must not sit in the Queen's chair.

OFFICER

Must not, my mistress? I am there.

SECOND WOMAN

You shall not do her this offence.

## END AND BEGINNING

### OFFICER

Girl, do you think to drive me hence?  
You and your sisters and this Queen  
That memory of what once has been?  
I do my will here, nor think twice  
Of this old dignity's device  
But beat it down where it belongs.

*(He tears down the device)*

### SECOND WOMAN

They shall not let you do these wrongs,  
I'll call her men. *(She goes Left Back)*

### OFFICER

Call whom you will.  
Now all the castle is as still  
As the deep grave: but silently  
My carpenters all work for me  
Raising a stage within the hall,  
Making no hammer-noise at all,  
As men who fashion coffins use.  
All silent fastening with screws.  
And some strew black and others red  
Where this, the Scottish Queen, shall tread

Down in the barns, the halberdiers  
Sleep with the straw about their ears.

## END AND BEGINNING

Among the ashes crickets keep  
Their cry to folk who cannot sleep.  
The owls hoot and the foxes bark;  
The sick man's candle shocks the dark;  
All the invisible great Night  
Heaves slowly over bringing light.

And when the light comes, then, ah then,  
Word will go thrilling among men.  
When cricket, owl and fox are gone  
Men will come thronging, and anon  
When all the gateways gleam with spears  
And the slow death-bell nulls the ears  
And all the hundreds in the hall  
Wait for a woman's step and all  
Turn at her coming and a bright  
Steel axeblade flashes in the light . . .  
But the deer comes: the hunt is up.

*(MARY ENTERS, Left Back. She comes down the stage to the Centre. The two WOMEN keep well back to the Left of the stage. MARY expects the visitor to be a murderer sent to kill her.)*

## O F F I C E R

Madam, I have a word for you. Attend.  
You, madam, were admonished to repent  
And to confess your manifold offences  
Against Elizabeth our gracious Queen.  
You have not shewn contrition nor sense of fault

## END AND BEGINNING

Therefore the Queen has ordered me to strike  
Your canopy, and signify to you  
That you are a dead woman  
Deprived of honour, dignity and queenship.

### MARY

God of His Grace called me to be a Queen.  
I have been anointed and sacred as a Queen.  
I hold my dignity of Him alone  
To Him I will resign it, with my soul.  
I do not recognize your Queen as mine  
Nor her heretical council for my judges.  
I will die a Queen, in spite of those whose power  
Is like that which the robbers exercise  
In some dark den on righteous folk. I trust  
That God, after my death, will manifest  
The integrity of my cause to all this realm.

Often, Kings in this country have been murdered.  
No wonder, then, if I should have that fate  
Being of that same royal blood. King Richard  
Was treated thus, because of his just rights.

### OFFICER (*Striking down the canopy*)

Madam. There lies your canopy and here  
I sit, with covered head. (*He sits with covered head.*)  
I tell you frankly

## END AND BEGINNING

You have no time nor leisure left to you  
For idle recreations so be warned.

(THE NOBLE ENTERS, *Right Back*)

### NOBLE

Madam, God save your grace. You sir, arise  
And if you are not brazen, be ashamed  
Of such foul rudeness. Since you cannot blush  
Means shall be found to make you sensible  
Of your brutality. Stand further back.

Madam, I grieve that any officer  
Should have behaved thus foully to your grace.  
I ask your pardon.

I am deeply grieved  
To tell you that my Sovereign sends me here  
To bring you heavy tidings.

Twelve weeks since  
We told you of your Doom and sentence passed.

Now we bring warrant to enact that sentence.  
I ask that you will hear it read aloud.  
First show her Grace the Kingdom's seal affixed.

(THE OFFICER *shows the seal*)

### MARY

I observe the great seal. I attend the reading.

## END AND BEGINNING

### NOBLE

Read, then, the warrant of our Sovereign Queen.

### OFFICER

Elizabeth, by the grace of God, Queen of England, France and Ireland:—knowing the sentence given by Us and others of Our Council against the erstwhile Queen of Scotland, bearing the name of Mary, we now command and enjoin you to take the said Queen of Scotland and see that execution be done upon her person, for which this shall be your full and sufficient discharge forever. From our House at Greenwich, Feb. 1st, the 29th year of our Reign.

I display the Sovereign's signature appended.  
God save the Queen.

### MARY

In the name of God, these tidings are most welcome.  
I bless and praise His Power that the end  
Of all my bitter sufferings is at hand.  
I did not think the Queen, my sister Queen,  
Would ever have consented to my death.  
God's will be done.  
He is my witness, I shall render up  
My Spirit to His Hands all innocent

## END AND BEGINNING

Of all offence against her.  
I shall appear before God's Majesty  
Clear of all crimes whereof I am accused.  
That soul is far unworthy of the joys  
Of Heaven, whose body cannot bear one moment  
The executioner's stroke. Death will be welcome.  
What time has been appointed for my suffering?

### N O B L E

To-morrow morning at eight o'clock, Madam.

### M A R Y

That is very sudden and leaves me no time  
For preparation. I have not yet made  
My Will, because my papers have been seized  
Needs must that I endeavour to provide  
For faithful servants who have sacrificed  
All things for my sake and in losing me  
Will lose all things. I therefore beg of you  
A little longer time, to make my will  
And fit my soul for death.

### O F F I C E R

You have had time.

It's more than two months since I brought you word  
You were condemned.

## END AND BEGINNING

### NOBLE

No, no, madam, alas.  
It is not in our power to grant you time.  
You die to-morrow at the hour named.  
But to prepare your soul, with consolation  
You may have either the Bishop or the Dean.  
The Dean is a most learned theologian,  
Able to show the errors of the falsehood  
In which you were brought up, and teach the truth.  
And as you have so little time to live  
It would be well if you confessed your faults  
And seized the true faith for your soul's salvation,  
Not trifle with vain toys. You have some wisdom,  
And may be able to discern the truth,  
Hearing the learned Dean.

### MARY

I have heard much,  
And read much, on this subject of salvation  
Since I was prisoner here. My mind's resolved  
To die in the religion of my baptism.  
I willingly would give ten thousand lives  
If that might be, not only shed my blood  
But bear the harshest tortures, in that cause.

### OFFICER

Your life would be the death of our religion,

## END AND BEGINNING

Your death will save it. Madam, you say true  
You die for the religion of your baptism.

### MARY

Ah, I have never dared self-flattery so  
As think that I was worthy such a death;  
And I receive it humbly as an earnest  
That I am numbered among God's chosen servants.

I have been harshly used here. I am Queen  
Of Scotland, the Queen-Dowager of France,  
The great grand-daughter of an English King,  
Your Queen's most near relation and true heir.  
I who was promised friendship have had prison  
For nineteen years, through guile of ministers.  
Now, by false accusation, I am cast  
Illegally, without authority  
To perish by the headsman.

### I take God

To witness on this Testament, that never  
Never did I desire, seek, nor favour  
The killing of your Queen.

### OFFICER

Your book is popish  
Your oath no worth.

## END AND BEGINNING

MARY

It is my Church's Gospel.  
More sacred, as I think, than that you use.  
I thank you; but I will not see your priests.  
I beg that I may see my almoner.

NOBLE

That is against our law.

OFFICER

And against conscience.

MARY

Then I must trust God's mercy to excuse  
The want of rites such as His holy Church  
Declares to be essential before death.  
Tell me this: Has the Queen of England sent  
An answer to my letter?

NOBLE

No. No answer.

## END AND BEGINNING

MARY

Will she allow my body to be taken  
By these my servants to be laid in France  
By the late King, my husband, at St. Denis  
Or by my Mother, the late Queen, at Rheims?

NOBLE

We do not know this.

MARY

Will your Queen return  
My papers, and allow my poor true servants  
To have the trifling payments I bequeath them?

OFFICER

I think, that as your papers cannot pleasure  
Her Majesty, they will be all returned  
Your little furniture will be departed  
As you dispose.

MARY

Is my son well?

END AND BEGINNING

NOBLE

Yes, lady.

MARY

How does he take my treatment?

OFFICER

He digests it.

Such are his words.

MARY

Has he, have other princes  
Of Christendom made efforts in my cause?

NOBLE

No, madam, none; they will not, neither can.

MARY

My secretaries: are they dead?

## END AND BEGINNING

NOBLE

Alive.

MARY

Is Nau alive?

NOBLE

He is, but in close prison.

MARY

Nau is the author of my death; he has  
Sacrificed me to save his own life: surely.

NOBLE (*to OFFICER*)

I remit this lady to your hands again.  
You will take charge of her till I return.

FIRST WOMAN (*Coming down*)

Sir, I must make a protest, ere you go.  
Think of the suddenness of this announcement  
The shortness of the time that you allow

## END AND BEGINNING

My royal mistress to dispose affairs  
Temporal and eternal: the meanest man  
Nay, sir, the vilest criminal on earth  
Waiting the cart, would have been granted longer  
To fit his soul for death. More courtesy  
More reverence, should surely be displayed  
To a Princess and Queen, and such a Queen.

### NOBLE

I have no power to prolong the time.

(NOBLE and OFFICER go out, Right Back.)

(MARY sits Centre. WOMEN weep Left.)

### MARY

Leave weeping, now; be doing: time is short.  
Did I not say, my children, this would fall?  
Blessed be God that it has fallen, and fear  
And sorrow are at an end. Weep not. Lament not.  
It cannot help; rather rejoice to see  
The end of all my troubles and afflictions.  
Did you not mark the power of truth? They said  
That I was doomed for an attempt to kill  
The Queen of England, of which crime you know  
That I am innocent. But now this Lord  
Lets out the fact, that it is on account  
Of my religion. Oh the glorious thought  
That I am chosen to die for such a cause.

## END AND BEGINNING

Fill now that little drinking-cup with wine.

(FIRST WOMAN *fills and brings*)

I drink to you, my faithful follower,  
Wishing you happier days in years to come  
Than you have known in prison here with me.  
May a blessing from my thanks be with you always  
Now will you drink to me?

(FIRST WOMAN *kneels*)

### FIRST WOMAN

O my beloved Queen, for pity, pardon,  
Forgive me if I ever failed or pained you.

### MARY

Friend, you can never know, never imagine  
The joy your faith has given me all these years.

(To the SECOND WOMAN)

Now let me drink to you, wishing you blessing  
And peace and happiness within your home;  
All lovely things that you have sacrificed  
To be with me, God thank you for it, friend.  
Will you pledge me?

### SECOND WOMAN

If ever I offended you, or injured,  
Forgive me, I beseech you, oh forgive me.

## END AND BEGINNING

MARY

That I most gladly do, if there be cause  
But cannot think there be. I entreat you  
If I have ever treated either of you  
With harshness or injustice, pardon me.

FIRST WOMAN

You were never never anything but gentle.

SECOND WOMAN

And we, dull clods, ever remiss and grudging.

MARY (*Sits*)

Let me give last commands my faithful servants.  
When I am gone, be constant in religion,  
Love one another, and, for my sake, cease  
Your little quarrels and your jealousies,  
And live in Christian amity together  
Which will be easier, now that one has gone  
Who used to sow dissension in the household.

(*She rises*)

(*To FIRST WOMAN*)

You, gentle friend, go to my almoner  
Since I have been forbidden: ask him from me  
To recommend such prayers and gospel verses

## END AND BEGINNING

As he thinks fittest for me; ask him, too,  
To keep in prayer and vigil with and for me  
All through to-night: No. I must write this to him.  
Come, then, within and I will write to him.  
Then I will part the little queenly splendour  
Left to me, with my friends: and so be ready  
To start uncumbered on my road to God.

*(They go out Left Back.)*

*Curtain*

O F F I C E R (*Discovered*)

So, not much longer shall I have this charge,  
After these years of ceaseless vigilance,  
Daylong and nightlong, plot and counterplot,  
Alarms and false alarms, and day and night  
Wondering whether rescuers would come  
Or whether her fine craft would find a means  
To write and bribe and compass an escape.  
Now she is in the net with no escape,  
And the Queen does it: warrant signed and sealed.  
The nobles in commission to enforce it.  
I have escaped: it has not fallen to me.

And yet, only a few short days ago,  
We keepers had a letter from the Court  
From Walsingham and Davison together  
Saying that Queen Elizabeth has noted  
A lack of zeal in us, that all this time  
We have not of ourselves found out a way  
Of shortening the Scotch Queen's life; that she,  
Elizabeth, thought this a lack of love  
In us towards her, and a lack of care  
Of true religion and the public good;  
That she, Elizabeth, took it unkindly  
That we, shrinking from keeping of our oaths,  
Cast all the burden of the task on her  
Who hated, as we know, shedding of blood  
Especially the blood of a princess  
So near related.

## END AND BEGINNING

This, that so greatly troubled her, was sent  
For our good judgments, meaning that the hint  
So given should be taken and ourselves  
Murder this foreign princess, and then doubtless  
Be murdered by the law for doing so.  
But God be thanked we were not to be caught  
By such like hints of murder: now, to-day  
Elizabeth will do the deed herself  
Mary will die this morning, and to-night  
I shall sleep soundly, knowing she is dead.  
O me what utter joy: some little trouble  
Perhaps in sending off her foreign servants,  
Then peace at last.

All things are now prepared  
For her last scene: the scaffold has been built  
In the great hall: the block is in its place  
All covered decently with cheap black cloth.  
A scarlet cushion lies for her to kneel on  
To take the stroke: I've had a fire lit  
In the great hall: it is such frosty weather.  
Let me recount what other things are ready.  
The barricade to keep spectators back.  
The Sheriff's spears and the Earl Marshal's men  
Standing to arms as guards: the courtyards full  
Already, of the countrypeople gathered  
To cheer when her head falls. A band of music  
To play as though a witch were being burned  
The tune of 'Jumping Joan.' Horses are ready  
To bear the news to London to the Court.  
Ay, and the chief clown of the play is ready  
All dressed in black and in his mask of black

## END AND BEGINNING

The ruffian headsman, Bull, is in his place,  
Lolling upon the scaffold railing joking,  
With the earl's grooms and footmen, and at times  
Supping his brandy, whetting up his axe  
And calling "where's this cow that Bull shall tame."  
But there:—after the execution has been done  
The Earls must dine: I must attend to that . . .  
They will need wine, and good . . . I must give  
orders.

*(He goes out, Right Back.)*

## FIRST WOMAN

Like a fair day, she has been more beautiful  
At sunset. When her treasures had been shared  
Among us, she began a farewell letter  
To the French King, then wrote her will, and then  
Commended us, her servants, to his care.  
Poor, beautiful great soul she was exhausted  
By all this thought.  
At her night prayers she bade me read to her  
In Scripture, of some Saint who had sinned greatly  
"Read of the penitent thief upon the Cross:—  
He was a sinner—not so great as I,"  
She cried, "O may my blessed Lord, in memory  
Of his dear Passion, in my hour of death  
Have mercy on me as He had on him."  
Then having listened to those blessed words  
She laid her down to rest and closed her eyes.  
Her beauty was as quiet as in sleep

## END AND BEGINNING

I think she never slept, but only prayed  
Sometimes we saw her smile.

After her rest she called us to her, saying  
"I have but two hours' life remaining to me.  
Dress me for Death as for a festival."  
And, being dressed, she said a piteous thing:—  
"In my last instant, I shall be incapable  
Of thinking of this body. I beseech you  
For the dear love of our most blessed Saviour  
Do not forsake me as I suffer death  
There in the hangman's hands, but cover me."  
In some few minutes now that lovely soul  
Will be flung forth from life by ruffian hands;  
Torn from this place, which, though it has been  
prison  
Has still been home; her love has made it home.  
There is no help for us: the thing will be.

(MARY ENTERS with SECOND WOMAN. *She bears her will and papers.*)

### MARY

Women, I have been very blest this morning.  
For though my priest has been forbidden me,  
I had the Holy Elements, with leave  
From Rome, to offer them myself, ere death.  
I am so stayed with angels, I have comfort  
In my so soon release from long affliction.  
Once, when I was a child, my uncle told me  
"That I had all the courage of my race

## END AND BEGINNING

And should know well how to die." He never  
thought  
That I should prove his truth in such a death.

But happiness and earthly greatness pass  
Witness myself, the Queen of France and Scotland  
By birth and marriage, crowned with worldly honour  
Brought subject to the executioner,  
Though innocent, thank God, of any crime  
The crime alleged is but a flimsy pretext  
For my destruction.

I beseech you both  
Be present at my death, be witnesses  
Of my deportment and my faith. I know  
It will be agony to you to watch:  
Yet watch: be witnesses: you love me most.

When all is over, you may be permitted  
To bear my body into France: I beg you  
Stay all together as a family  
Till you can do this.

I will say farewell  
To you, with all my thanks. (*She kisses the FIRST WOMAN*)

And now to you  
Farewell, and thanks for countless services.

## SECOND WOMAN

O my beloved mistress, I beseech you  
Forgive me, and forgive my brother, too.

## END AND BEGINNING

MARY

Oh, rise. I forgive him and everyone  
As I myself now hope to be forgiven.

FIRST WOMAN

O Madam pardon me, if I say this:—  
Renée and Gillies beg me to remind you  
They are not in your Will: they are not greedy  
Of gifts, but pray it never may be thought  
That they have been unfaithful in their service.

MARY

That never shall be said. What can I leave them?  
Renée shall have . . . (*she writes*) and  
Gillies shall have that . . . (*writes*)  
I thank you for reminding me.

FIRST WOMAN

And madam,  
Your almoner . . . you have omitted him.

MARY

True, thank you: that will need a little thought.  
(*She thinks, then writes.*)  
There then, I leave the last of my possessions.

## END AND BEGINNING

And now that I have finished with the world  
My friends, let us all kneel and pray together  
For the last time.

*(They kneel, facing slightly Left)*

### MARY

O Domine Deus, speravi in Te;  
O care me Jesu, nunc libera me.  
In dura catena, in misera paena, desidero  
Languendo, gemendo et genu flectendo  
Adoro, imploro, ut liberes me.

*(There is a knocking on the door R. Back.)*  
See what the knocking is.

*(FIRST WOMAN goes)*

### FIRST WOMAN

Speak, who is there?

### OFFICER

Her hour has come: the clock has stricken eight.

### FIRST WOMAN

Her Majesty is praying with her servants.

## END AND BEGINNING

OFFICER

Ah. Let her pray then for a little while.

MARY

Unbolt the door; there must be no resistance . . .  
That would bring violence.

(FIRST WOMAN *returns*)

Come, sisters, let us pray.  
"Thou art my rock and my fortress  
Therefore for Thy Name's sake, lead me.

I am forgotten as a dead man.  
I am like a broken vessel.

I have heard the slander of many  
They devised to take away my life.

Cast me not away from Thy presence.  
Take not Thy Holy Spirit from me.

(*There is a knocking at the door.*)  
The Lord is my refuge and my fortress  
My God, in Him will I trust.

(*The knocking again.*)  
Go, open to them; then return to us.

(*The FIRST WOMAN opens the door: then returns and kneels.*)  
Because thou hast made the Lord thy habitation  
There shall no evil befall thee.

(*The OFFICER ENTERS silently.*)

## END AND BEGINNING

For He shall give his angels charge over thee  
To keep thee in all His ways.

They shall bear thee up in their hands."

### O F F I C E R

See. I am come. I am come.

### M A R Y (To SECOND WOMAN)

Give me the little cross into my hand.

(*The NOBLE ENTERS. MARY rises.*)

### M A R Y

So, gentlemen, you come to seek for me.  
I am ready and am resolute to die.  
So let us go. But I am very lame.  
Help me, my friends. (*The WOMEN help her.*)  
(*They take two or three steps, then stop.*)

### F I R S T W O M A N

Your Majesty . . . this thing we cannot do.  
We'll wait upon you, die with you, if granted  
But oh, we cannot lead you to your death.

## END AND BEGINNING

### MARY

You are right. (*To NOBLE.*) See, Sir; my servants  
cannot lead me  
To death: I cannot walk without support.  
I must have help.

### NOBLE

We will assist you down.

### OFFICER

You women, stand aside and come no further.

### FIRST WOMAN

But we come, too.

### SECOND WOMAN

We are to go with her.

### OFFICER

You'll stay, or you'll be made to, by brute force.  
You foreign, Romish hussies: get you back.

## END AND BEGINNING

### FIRST WOMAN

It is most cruel and unparalleled  
To rob her at her death of faithful servants  
Who have borne many years of prison with her.

### OFFICER

Cruel or not, you'll find it is the case.

### MARY

I have requests to make: let them be granted . . .  
The money given by me to Curle my servant  
It has been snatched from him by brutal hands.  
May it be restored to him?

### OFFICER

Why, yes: it shall be.

### MARY

May all my servants be allowed to have  
My poor bequests?

### NOBLE

Yes, certainly, they shall.

## END AND BEGINNING

MARY

May they be kindly treated and sent safely  
To their own countries after I am dead?

NOBLE

I cannot doubt it: nay, I promise it.

MARY

I thank you deeply for these courtesies.  
Lastly, I conjure you, that these poor friends  
My dear, afflicted servants may be with me  
There at my death, that they may see me die.

NOBLE

No, madam, what you ask cannot be granted.  
For if it should be, some of them with speeches  
Swoonings and what not, would be grievous to you.  
And troublesome and noisome to ourselves  
We've had experience of friends at headings.  
Also they would not stick  
To put some superstitious trumpery in practice  
The least would be dipping their handkerchiefs  
Into your Grace's blood for relics of you.  
It would be most unfit to permit this.

## END AND BEGINNING

### MARY

I will give my word, although it be but dead,  
My Lord, that they shall do none of these things.  
Alas, poor souls, the only good they ask  
Is to take leave of me. I hope your Mistress,  
Being a Maiden Queen,  
Will vouchsafe, for the sake of Womanhood,  
That women may be by me at my death.  
I know her Majesty hath not given you  
Such strict commission, but that you might grant me  
Far greater courtesy than this . . .  
Even were I woman of far meaner calling.

### OFFICER

What shall it be, Sir? I'm against it, truly.

### NOBLE

Madam, the inconveniences are such  
As I have told you. These must stand aside.

### MARY

I am Cousin to your Queen, of the Blood Royal  
Of Henry Tudor, Dowager of France,  
And sacred and anointed Queen of Scotland,  
Yet you refuse me this.

## END AND BEGINNING

NOBLE (*To OFFICER*)

It is harsh measure.

She is a peerless lady.

OFFICER

These are not.

These will but scream and swoon and cause disturbance

And put the headsman off his stroke belike.

NOBLE

There will be guards enough to quiet them.

OFFICER

That, sir, is not the point: they will upset  
The dignity and office of the law  
And rouse the sympathies of malcontents.

NOBLE

I'll run the risk of that.

(*To the QUEEN.*) Madam, I grant you  
Leave to choose two from out your women servants.

## END AND BEGINNING

MARY

I choose these two: the best loved that I have.

NOBLE

If, as we pass, you would select four men  
Out of your household, I will grant you those.

MARY

Let me then choose the four dear faithful ones,  
Good Andrew Melville, Master of my Household,

(To SECOND WOMAN)

Will you go bid him meet me at the stairfoot?  
Come with him there.

(SECOND WOMAN *goes out. L. Back.*)

And you, will you go call Bourgoigne and Gervais  
And Gourion, my doctors, who have tended  
Me, in my sicknesses these many years?

Tell them to follow to the Court below.  
Let them bring you.

(FIRST WOMAN *goes out Left Back.*)

(To NOBLE)

Sir, let me thank you truly for this grace . . .  
It will mean much to these poor friends of mine.  
Now, sir, another kindness if you will,  
Lend me your arm to help me down the stairs  
When we have reached the level of the hall,

## END AND BEGINNING

Then I will walk alone, the few brief steps  
That lead me to the presence of my God.

*(She goes out Right Back, leaning on the  
NOBLE's arm. The OFFICER holds the curtain  
and follows her.)*

*(A SPIRIT OF BEAUTY ENTERS Left and goes  
Centre.)*

### THE SPIRIT

I live in Life's intensesness: everywhere  
I bring the heavenly salt of being fair

Something of me is in the torted rings  
Of the green viper whipped round flapping wings

And in the bird who floats on the wind's stream  
Watching the currents crawl in the sea's gleam;

And in the barry reeds, the velvet slink  
Of noiseless pads of death coming to drink;

And in the lion-leap on the gazelle  
The desert-skimmer broken at the well;

And in the stallion hurtling like the spear,  
And in all bright-eyed things wide-eyed from fear;

And in all butterflies whose scarlet glows  
On honey trumpets before summer goes.

\* \* \* \*

In the first primrose from the Spring's green blood,  
When blackbirds build behind the blackthorn bud.

## END AND BEGINNING

And in the Summer when the living green  
Calls the red rose for King, the white for Queen;

In Autumn's apples on the leafless branch;  
In cornfields that the harvest moon doth blanch;

In Winter's silence of the Earth grown old  
With all the forest standing still i' the cold;

All these are mine: and something of me strives  
In childhood's memory of other lives

Of firelight in caves, and water falling  
And padding were-wolves in the midnight calling.

\* \* \* \*

I quicken life: the curling of my lip  
Gleams in the forefoot of the leaping ship

I laugh in forges where the hammers smite  
Red sparks and yellow from the glowing white

I wrestle in all struggles: on all courses  
I urge the wheels: I gallop with the horses.

I triumph in all windvanes set as crown  
On swaying spires up above the town

I key the arch beneath which Emperors pass  
I am the palace that the conqueror has.

## END AND BEGINNING

All conquest and all laurel and all prize  
Are madness for the brightness of my eyes.

\* \* \* \*

I am that colour and singing in the mind  
That make the painter faint, the poet blind.

I am the tower men think of as they build  
I am the gold men think of as they gild

I am the city shining like the sun  
With power exercised and glory done.

I am the truth to which the seeker strains  
I am the living lightning upon brains.

I am the key by which man's mind unlocks  
Wisdom from prison, water from all rocks.

\* \* \* \*

I deck the lovely girl, that men may see  
Beauty in Time and in Eternity.

I gird the lively lad, that after ages  
May have a story blazoned upon pages.

I move among all living things, to bless  
The instant that annuls all nothingness,

That only is eternal, the swift thrill  
Into the bliss that killing cannot kill.

## END AND BEGINNING

And that my lovers find: and this one finds  
In treacheries that stun, in grief that blinds,

In agony of longing to be free,  
A centre constant in inconstancy.

\* \* \*

So from the shocking second she will pass  
Into the quiet that the planet has

In dewy mornings, when the forest lies  
Dark, and the dim world slumbers with shut eyes

And yet no colour glows, and owls are gone  
And that still lamp the planet is alone

Possessing all the peace, lighting and riding,  
The Hope become alive, beauty abiding.

Among that planet's quiet, she'll descry  
The wild duck stringing, crying as they fly

And laughing, fly with them, and see the night  
Drift into colour, colour into light

And know the nightmare over, that has been  
Living on earth a prisoner and a queen.

What then shall follow, shall be what she wrought:  
The faith, the hope, the charity of her thought.

(*EXIT Left Front.*)

## END AND BEGINNING

NOBLE (*enters*)

The purpose of our Queen, Elizabeth,  
Declared upon her warrant, signed and sealed,  
Has been enacted. It is now my duty  
To tell you how the woman, Mary Stuart,  
Met death some minutes since there in the hall.

Though she was lame, her spirit was too queenly  
To falter before peril: she walked proudly  
Straight to the scaffold foot, but asked for help  
Up the steep steps. Her jailer helped her up  
She smiled on him and said "I thank you, sir,  
This is the last trouble that I shall give you."

Then sitting in the chair beside the block  
She heard the Warrant for her death proclaimed.  
She smiled with a sweet smile and crossed herself  
And asked that the old priest, her almoner,  
Might be permitted there to pray with her.  
That was refused. We could not grant her that.  
Then Doctor Fletcher, Dean of Peterborough,  
Standing outside the scaffold, bending low,  
Began to preach at her. She gently checked him  
With "Trouble not yourself nor me, for know  
That I am settled in the ancient faith  
Defending which I mind to spend my blood."

"Madam," the Dean replied, "change your opinion.  
Repent you of your former wickedness."

## END AND BEGINNING

“Good Mr. Dean,” she said, “good Mr. Dean,  
Trouble yourself no more about this matter,  
I was born in this religion and am resolved  
To die in this religion, by God’s grace.”

We, seeing her resolved in stubbornness,  
Said, “Madam, we will pray with Mr. Dean,  
For you, that you may have your spirit lightened  
With the true knowledge.”

“O my Lords,” she said,  
“If you will pray with me, even from my heart,  
I’ll thank you for it: but to pray with you  
After your manner,  
You being not of the one faith with me,  
Would be a sin.”

At this I told the Dean,  
“Speak, at your pleasure.”

So the Dean began  
Some bitter hometruths against Anti-Christ,  
Good comfortable doctrine: a soul’s purge:  
Alas, she did not heed: like the deaf adder  
She turned from him.

She read aloud some Psalms  
And prayed in Latin, then in French and English,  
For God’s forgiveness of her sins and foes.  
For the afflicted Church, and the two kingdoms,  
Then for her Son and Queen Elizabeth.

## END AND BEGINNING

Then, rising from her knees, she raised her cross  
And cried on Christ to take her and blot out  
Her sins.

At this I interrupted her.  
"Madam," I said, "it would be better for you  
To eschew such trumpery and bear your Lord  
Deep in your heart."

She answered a strange thing:  
"How can I bear in hand a carven image  
Of my Redeemer without bearing Him  
Deep in my heart as well?"

The headsmen knelt and begged for her forgiveness.  
She said, "I forgive you and all the world  
With all my heart, because I hope this death  
Will give an end to all my troubles."

At this  
She raised her hands as though to lift her coif  
To be ready for the block. Then both the hangmen  
Came up to help her, but she drew away  
And asked them not to touch her. "For," she said,  
"I have not been accustomed to such pages;  
Nor to disrobe before so great a throng."  
She beckoned to her women, who with screams  
And cryings, were incapable of helping.  
"Come, do not weep," she said. "I am most happy  
To leave this world: you also should rejoice  
To see me dying in a cause so good."

## END AND BEGINNING

Nay, be ashamed to weep: if you lament thus  
I can but send you hence; remember, friends,  
That I have promised for you."

Then very calmly  
She as one going to her rest withdrew  
The bright pins from her lawn, and lifted off  
Her gold pomander, chain and rosary.

And this, the executioner, John Bull,  
Snatched from her hands and thrust it in his shoe.  
But the tall waiting-woman who was here  
Struggled to get it from him: snatching at it  
And wrestling with him there.

The Scottish Queen  
Turned gently to the brute and spoke these words:  
"Friend, let her have it, she will give you thrice  
Its money value"; but the brute replied,  
"It is my perquisite and it is mine."

Then she embraced and kissed and blessed her ladies  
And drew on crimson sleeves and bade them bind  
A handkerchief and Corpus Christi cloth  
Over her eyes. She said, "O do not weep,  
But pray for me."

So she was left alone  
Kneeling upon the cushion near the block.  
In the dead stillness, her clear thrilling voice  
Spoke out with rapture: *In te Domine.*

## END AND BEGINNING

And bowing down her head upon the block,  
She prayed, *In manus tuas, Domine.*

Then, as one hangman gripped her hands, John Bull  
Struck clumsily, and held the head aloft,  
And cried "God save our Queen Elizabeth."

"So let her enemies perish," cried the Dean.

But only one man there, answered Amen.  
All there were moved by the most piteous end  
Of the most gracious, courteous royal lady  
That ever was betrayed by brutal men  
And greedy men, and scoundrels and base knaves,  
Falsehood, and savagery and forgery.

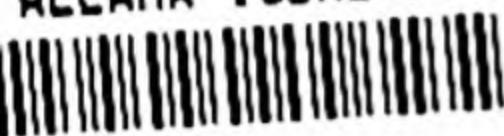
Not yet are all the damned indignities  
Done on her body that have been commanded:  
I will not speak of those, only say this,  
That I shall ever bitterly repent  
The orders laid upon me to make harsh  
Her passing from this world.  
No man, not even a courtier, can betray her  
Again, forever: as I think, her reign  
As Queen, begins now. She is beautiful  
In the world's heart, and human policy  
Has done its worst upon her and yet failed.  
May her lovely spirit be in bliss this moment.

*(He goes out.)*

## END AND BEGINNING

*(The Curtain is nearly drawn, and the light dimmed. After ten seconds, the SPIRIT OF MARY enters silently to the Centre of the stage.)*

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MARY

How soon the bitternesses cease:  
This little minute from release,  
Has made them end.  
In my beginning there is peace.

O marvellous quiet, without fear  
Of what can happen or appear  
By chance or will.  
Life at its very heart is here.

O excellence beyond all trust,  
O ecstasy untouched by dust,  
O treasure true,  
Untattered by the moth and rust.

I lift in quiet into light,  
Exultant, deathless, infinite,  
Joy beyond joy.  
The beauty equal with the might.

*Curtain.*

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